

1953

OUTPOSTS

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DONALD HALL

The Pilgrim

WHEN Easter could not come, he stormed the night
To end its tyranny, and in the fight
The rising Christ flew golden overhead,
Chaired by a crew of angels from the dead.
Before the ascended cross, he saw his foe
Turn pale and look for any place to go
And finding none, just melt and drift away,
Ridiculous beneath the glorious day.
Then all that spring he heard the music, tame,
House-broken, drab, and always just the same,
Drift down upon his skull. Above the sky
The troops of angels kept on marching by,
All of them bright and sure, and all of them quite the same.
And so when summer came he took French leave.
Above, the music never stopped to grieve
But faded gently out. The hills were green,
The mountain rock was bluish grey. The scene
Was all-in-all a mirror of his soul.
Mushrooms and berries were his food. The mole,
The rabbit, and the fat hedgehog, he fed,
And slept on needles in a gulley-bed.
Then from the valley rose the sounds of war.
He listened. Then the hedgehog came no more,
The rabbit fled from him, the mushrooms turned
To toadstools overnight. And now he burned
To leave the hill and civilize himself once more.
The smell of powder led him to a lake
And there he saw a smoky island shake
With war. The screams and bursts and searing smells
Tangled his head with terror. When the shells
Blasted his hat from his head, he joined the line
And bayoneted children with a fine
Heroic sense of honour. Erupting air
Shattered around his shoulders, tossed his hair.
But then a slow and hesitating yawn
Of languor filled him, to be gone
From such affairs—and so he pulled up sticks,
Deserted to the woods where politics
Would never learn to go, where they had never gone.

He wandered through the wood. A drunken sound
Of saxophones and easy music wound
Out of a grove of trees, and drove him wild.
He howled in Comus' garden, and beguiled
Poor kin-lost virgins of their stock-in-trade.
A thousand satyr-kindled blondes he laid,
And only ceased each record-breaking day
When too much gin had washed his sense away.
But then he heard the jazz repeat a note
Over and over, like a bleating goat.
The heavy-assed baboon Satiety
Sat on his chest, and only let him free
When he had sworn he'd leave the boundaries of the Goat.

Running, he came to where he saw debris
Of battle with the slough of night, where he
Had lighted up the world. He sighed and sat
Upon a broken altar. Wails arose, thereat,
And with a short explosion he was cast
Into the air a mile, and viewed the past.
But all he saw were fragments, here and there,
A hill, an island, woods, but mostly bare.
Kerplunking, he was sad. The world was just
A smorgasbord of different kinds of lust.
He cried at limitations, and the night
Immediately rose up and drowned the light.
And now again he howled for Easter in his lust.

U.S.A.

LOUIS JOHNSON

Nightshift Widow

THE moment he's gone, the hairy hand of fear
grope in the darkness for her : "Only the wind,"
sense says, but the heart has an ear
pent on more ominous notes of the flapping blind.

A nerve at every pore gapes like a wound
waiting for hurt in the dark. Outside, the roar
of a passing car could muffle the sound
of her warning scream as terrible pinions tear

her unwilling breast. Silence again. It is worse
than a threatening noise—the feline purr
death always makes—this is the pause,
perhaps, before the pounce which overshadows her.

All night, all night the darkness stirs and moans;
the house leans over, creaks in every joint,
threatens to smother : when the morning comes,
oh, if it comes—how will her praises pant

to God, to him returning cold and blue
from stolid hours of labour to tired arms
welcoming his strength, not knowing who
possessed her devilled heart the long night through.

New Zealand.

F. PRATT GREEN

A View of the Baptism

SOME who stood on the crinkled crags above
Jordan described the descent of the dove

from a thunder-cloud the lightning sundered,
not to drop death but a pitiful small bird,

pretty as a plaything. It hovered over
depraved humanity and the dirty river

before softly falling down a sun's shaft
to him whose hands were lifted for a gift;

and the kestrel that killed it cast a crooked
shadow on his back as they dipt him, naked,

in cleansing water. I was elsewhere, caught
by questions, watching crowds move to the ghat.

What unlikely sin did he need to repent?
Or was it only to show willing he went?

IAIN CRICHTON SMITH

Lewis My Island

MY thoughts go rocking home now and forever
to you, the island, set in my heart's blood
as a wound or a rose is set,
a stone each moment gathering all my fever
like water running. That will not subside
as long as the sea will wait,
as long as a knocking door evokes a ghost,
released by you, a pale light from the past.

Your mackerel skies sail lightly over my head:
but as a boy hangs to his struggling kite
or a fisher tugs at his line
so I am tied to you by a visible thread,
blue as a sky, that my thought will never cut,
though it root to the depths of the mine.
At high tide of manhood or as a boy,
to cut your thread would only myself destroy.

Though crooked as a plough I take my way
through the noon's grief and the night's decay,
you are in my head crying
the purifying seas. You on the edge of time,
as on land's edge, are a truth making dumb
my mouth in the heart of dying,
and the tall men stooping to a worm's height
in the centreless movement they do not care to hate.

I would not be the nightbird, the owl, in the blazing day
casting a shadow. Nor would I sing branch and twig away
from the tree I had chosen;
nor is it useful to stare from an island on
to the flat days with eyes that have turned to stone
too heavy for vision.
I would only regain the music which affirms
that calm, like a bird in the egg lies deep in the storm.

To go truly home is to be purified
in the tremendous presence of the tide,
foaming shrouds of water,
as if the dead were wrestling in the flood.

More easy to kill the living than the dead,
but surely, my island, better
to be at peace with both. Let me be fed
at your stone breast; let my words come out of your side.

ROBERT CONQUEST

Life and Symbol

IMAGINATION is not strong enough;
I see her dimly through a lifeless verse
Who glows in the reality of love;
My vision holds her vague and motionless
Beneath refracting media of art,
Like that old legend's sleeping paradise;
The sky and trees are still; the hours pass;
And only as the images depart
My love, a sharp jewel, cuts the glass,
My heart, a hot coal, melts the ice.

ROY McFADDEN

Poet

THE world of give against the world of take.
One function of the poet is to break
Off distance like dead wood; to bring
in verse
Opposing worlds within one universe.
Giver and taker, poet: you must give
Back what you took, and more, before you
live:
For chaos and the flapping world-swept mind,
Style and significance, for the dry rind
Of intellect, maturity of heart:
And conjure systems from one broken part
Dropped like a feather by a nameless bird
That flies unseen until you find the word.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

Rain

RAIN
When it falls on land
Is a strange element, owned
By gutters and ponds and pools;
Welcome, yet other,
To buds whose wheels it greases,
Mineral, yet not quite brother
To dust and stone and sand.
On land we keep account of rain
By watching clouds and hearing the drip in the eaves
And knowing the smell of it among the leaves.

But rain
When it falls on sea
Is scarcely seen or heard or smelt
But only felt—
As if a skelter of birds with pittering feet
Were letting on the glass roof of the waves.
The unsalt water falling through the passive air
Has no identity there
Where each drop tastes of the full Atlantic brine.
Back again in the sea
Rain
Is only sea again.

ALAN BROWNJOHN

A Goldfish Poet

THROUGH shifting rooms of water in the dark
Able I fathom swaying floors of weed,
Pursuing only in my lucid globe
Their granted wage of necessary seed.
Amusing idly, tolerated guest,
I serve to furnish corners in the house,
Trapped in perception, protest is in vain
For parasite and plaything, cat and mouse.

Perhaps unsuited to this violent place,
My race is hunted if they suffer me,
And still they will not realise or recall
What things my circling eyes are fixed to see.

I hear their voices, helpless to resolve
The hate between them, watch their passions rise,
And in my weakness sadly see the fear
Suspicion leavens in their hostile eyes.

I note the rhyme of lips with lovers' lips,
Their fury and their worry and their pain,
Declare awareness, vision, grief, but then,
Scorned or unnoticed, turn to muse again.

RALPH GUSTAFSON

Legend

WHOEVER is washed ashore at that place—
Many come there but thrust by so fierce a sun
The vast cliffs cast no shadow, plunge a passage
Inland where foliage and whistling paradise-birds
Offer comfort—whoever has got up,
Standing, certainty under his adjusting heels
And height tugged by the tide, ocean rinsing
From flank and belly, ravelling loins with wet,
Whoever has stayed, solitary in those tropics,
The caverns of his chest asking acres,
he,

Doomed in that landscape but among magnificence,
By shell and seafoam tampered with, his senses
As though by her of Aeaea used, exquisite—
He, that salt upon his time's tongue,
Knows, standing the margin ocean and sand,
Ilium toppled thunder his ears, what's left
Of Helen naked drag between his toes.

Canada.

JULIAN SYMONS

A Window in Ireland

THREE priests walk on the lawn. Beyond them lies
A hedge, the flat wet sand, and then the sea.
Two lighthouses are winking, and the hills
Preserve a natural mellow romantic
And boundless peace. And past the hills,
Set in the steel-blue sea, is the small island
That on the map is printed Ireland's Eye.

The night is dazzling, hot,
With the sky stretched out like a map containing
Islands of cirrus. Hills, horizon, sea,
Maintain a harmony of blue and grey;
The nearest hill is blue; the lights are yellow;
The quietly-talking priests are dressed in black.
And here in a small room is set the island
And roving eye through which this glory moves. . . .

Those islands, ah those islands !
The priests, the lighthouses, fading Ireland's Eye,
The blazing lands of cirrus set in turquoise,
And then beyond the sea the other island
That once a poet called a living grave,
All so immense, untroubled : though well-known
The force that drives the priests and makes the lighthouses
Give their bland twice-a-minute wink at God.

The islands of desire, the islands of
Tender and uncrushed love. On such a night,
On such a night as this my mind embraces
All of the islands, and the cirrus blends
Into a mess of beauty with the priests;
The hills come down to kiss the sea; the gulls
Mix with the hedge; the sand and lighthouses
Love one another; and the sea observes
Tolerantly, on such a night as this,
The mammoth gestures of five continents
Towards their death.

The deepening night
Cancels these moving pictures. Cirrus dies,
And Ireland's Eye has vanished. Deeper yet
And all the watching eyes are closed in sleep,
Continuing in dreams the strange illusions
That mark their daylight hours : those dreams, like waking thoughts,
Compact of love and murder.

JEREMY BROOKS

Terror is too rare to miss

WHERE the sea is angry and
Rock works solidly through sand
Child that now no longer is
What taste had that hard salt kiss?
And where in your vast of play
Time you found to find your day?

Child, the sea you know for cold
Only that you have been told;
Treacherous the flowering cliff
Only since you were warned off;
Sands are quick and tides are fast,
Love's all bogey at the last.

But with all this parcelled fear
Tempered hard with warning tear
You with wisdom now long lost
Made your mind the perfect host
Receiving with a conscious grin
Chains which come to bind you in.

Child, these chains you proudly bear
Killed you, are you not aware?
Minted instants you held then
Foiled by the conceit of men
Who insist your Now is never
Valuable as their Forever.

Child, I only warn with this :
Terror is too rare to miss.

GORDON WHARTON

MacSweeney's Father

*" and though they be hid from my sight in the
bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent,
and he shall bite them."*

AMOS.

MACSWEENEY'S father came home from the sea,
with a loot of starfish under his coat
and a blue haired woman with a seagreen stare:
he escaped the Orc in a sober boat
with his nerves shattered and weed in his hair.

He flipped his double-headed coin
which landed sideways on the floor,
one head smiling and the other grim,
before he hammered down my door
crying, Where's my son all covered with sin?

Where's my son that grew green feathers
and pestered the air for a singing bird?
I have brought him a woman in a seagreen cage,
and starfish caught on a bent pin word
when I walked the seabed in a red rage.

I showed him MacSweeney in the hawthorn tree,
MacSweeney stark naked chasing the wind,
I showed him his son out blessing the dead,
blessing the dead and their skulls that grinned,
grinned and turned his father's head.

What good is a woman in a cage
with green eyes, squid's eyes, or a skyblue stare.
what good are starfish caught with a word,
or miracles to a man that dares
be a mad saint like a singing bird?

MacSweeney's father flipped his coin
which landed sideways on the floor:
back to the sea and curse the birds,
he'll cage no woman and fish no more
with a bent pin for five-pointed words;

back to the sea, down the drunken tide
with his doubts shattered and weed in his hair.

MURIEL SPARK

Canaan

SHE is committed to the earth and the earth
Is plighted forever to her.
The wilderness is prone to her.
The hopeful race of all the earth is
Betrothed to her, pleasant ground of expectation,
Lambent country of Canaan.

Jordan heaved his banks away.
Jordan's valley bubbled over
Heavy between those opposites.
He rose by night; he dipped by day.
He dipped down for the hosts of the wilderness
And for the silver country of Canaan.

The men of the wilderness at Jordan's ford
Lifted the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders.
Jordan fled for all his worth.
Jordan-bed lay smitten to dry boulders.
The wilderness bore the Ark of the Lord
Of all the earth
Into the holy country of Canaan.

Canaan's the land where the wilderness landed.
Therefore I am not altogether confounded,
Still to discover a wilderness in her.

Jordan shed his ways, lifted up the river;
Canaan's husbanded
Now with a ploughing sword, she is anointed
With burning torrents, bridal country,
Canaan of loss.
There goes that leviathan in his glory;
But here dissembles that wilderness. Fowl and beast
Have no more wonderful identity.
The tribes of the pomegranates and the tribes of the yeast,

The families of rubies and the families of grass
Are one to another as waste and waste
In the arms of Canaan of silver dross.

But I am not altogether confounded
That so immanent and green and promised a land
Confounds me with seeming not what she seemed;
Seeing the hopeful race is covenanted
Not less to Canaan
Than Canaan to her promised wilderness;
Seeing default of the double covenant, seeing
Treachery to the warm harvest, no gathering in
Of the pearly vines of Canaan.
The same thing over and over again.
In this I am not altogether bewildered.

No year is twice the same, nor has occurred
Before. We bandy by the name of grief,
Grief which is like no other. Not a leaf
Repeats itself, we only repeat the word.

January, as usual, frigid. As before,
A silent stir in February. More
Of a stir in March. Activity
In April, as previously.
May, as usual, abundant. As before,
A superfluity in June. Greenery galore
Thereafter as always. The season exults,
But never the same season warily
Secretes the same petal from the same
Pod of a single bud. The circumstances are
Everywhere novel. The results
Only appear similar.

Time lacks experience. Therefore I am not quite
Confounded by history,
Being of the hopeful race of the earth,
Promised to promise, a mystery to mystery,
By which I am not altogether mystified,
Since she is plighted to me, a wilderness, and I to
The silver country of Canaan.

REVIEWS

New Poems 1953, a P.E.N. Anthology edited by Robert Conquest, Michael Hamburger and Howard Sergeant (Michael Joseph, 10s. 6d.).

Poetry Awards 1952 (University of Pennsylvania Press, \$2.50).

THE selection of contemporary poetry contained in these two anthologies can be taken as a fair cross-section of the best poetry being written today in the English-speaking world. The editing of such anthologies is an exacting and thankless task. In the present volumes that task has been shared in each case by an editorial panel, and whereas the three editors of the P.E.N. anthology have succeeded in producing a well-balanced collection of good poetry, the editors of *Poetry Awards* have produced an uneven conglomeration of the good, the bad and the mediocre. Having the whole of the English-speaking world of poetry as their theatre of operations, the insignificance of much of the poetry in the American anthology is either a gross reflection on the present condition of poetry or an indictment of the editorial policies pursued in its selection. I suspect the latter reason is the more likely in view of the editors' stated and flaunted preference for the application of divergent criteria. The acceptance of a particular set of standards by all the members of an editorial board has its dangers and may result in an unrepresentative selection. On the other hand, to apply no common standards whatsoever, relying on the individual editor's preferences and bringing the accumulated mass of variegated poetry together for final weeding, is a hit-and-miss approach with little to commend it.

The P.E.N. anthology is the second in a series of yearly collections of poetry by established poets and by younger and lesser-known poets. In these times the publication of such a series is an act of faith on the part of the publishers and it is to be hoped that all those who care for the craftsmanship of the poet will support the venture. The present volume is well worth the cost.

The poems are divided into seven sections and cover the work of sixty-four poets. In the first four sections the progression is chronological and there are poems by Walter de la Mare, Robert Graves, Roy Campbell, Edwin Muir, W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Kathleen Raine, Vernon Watkins, George Barker, Norman Nicholson and other poets of established reputations. The best poems in these early sections are by Robert Graves and Edwin

Muir, with some synthetic and rather tinny satire by Auden and good representative pieces by Vernon Watkins and George Barker. G. S. Fraser has contributed *Autumnal Elegy*, which may well prove to be the finest poem he has written to date.

In the last three sections the work is by poets who have emerged since the war and maintains a remarkably high standard. The more memorable poems are by D. J. Enright, John Smith and Elizabeth Jennings, but there is not a bad poem to be found in these sections and all the poets represented have something to say and know how to say it.

Poetry Awards is a collection of poems gathered from poetry published in magazines of the English-speaking world during 1951 and substantial cash prizes were awarded for the poems considered by the judges to be the best. An American poet, Leah Bodine Drake, gained the first prize, Dorian Cooke, an English poet, gained second prize, and Randall Jarrell gained the third prize. All three poems are competent examples of poetry that scorns experiment but presents well-worn themes with a certain freshness and charm of manner. One feels that Hegel, who stipulated that "metre is the first and only condition absolutely demanded by poetry," would have applauded the editors' choice. But, with all respect, there are at least eight poems in the P.E.N. anthology that reduce the three prize-winning efforts to insignificant mediocrity. Admittedly, they were written a year later, but can a year mean so much? Eleven British poets are represented, and I hope my preference for the poems of Norman Nicholson and Francis King as the best in the book will not be regarded as mere insular partisanship. Having regard to its tremendous possibilities, *Poetry Awards* is a most disappointing achievement.

B. EVAN OWEN.

Trial of a City: Earle Birney (Ryerson Press, Canada), \$2.50.

Counterpoint to Sleep: Anne Wilkinson (First Statement Press, Canada), \$1.00.

Footnote to the Lord's Prayer: Kay Smith (First Statement Press), \$1.00.

Twenty-Four Poems: Louis Dudek (Contact Press, Canada).

The Searching Image: Louis Dudek (Ryerson Press).

ALTHOUGH the Canadian poet, Dr. Earle Birney, has four volumes to his credit and has twice won the Governor-General's Award for poetry, his work is still far from being as well-known in this country as it deserves to be. That, no doubt, is largely due

to the patronising attitude most English critics adopt whenever they have to deal with a book published in one of the other Commonwealth countries. Dr. Birney's latest publication, *Trial of a City*, takes its title from a long satire, presented in dramatic form, based on the official procedure at a public hearing. Vancouver is the city on trial, but it serves as a symbol for all modern cities. The Office of the Future has proposed that Vancouver be "eliminated" and the Minister of History, having ruled that only the dead are impartial enough to be allowed to testify, is considering objections to the plan. Among those called up for the purpose of giving testimony are the discoverer of Burrard Inlet, an Indian Chief, an old pioneer of the shanty-towns, and a professor of geology (living but accepted as virtually dead). So the stage is set for the author to give free rein to his rich satirical gifts and he takes full advantage of the opportunity. Perhaps this fantasy, to which three-quarters of the book is devoted, should have been published by itself, for it tends to overshadow the separate poems which follow, despite the virile use of language.

Counterpoint to Sleep and *Footnote to the Lord's Prayer* are both first books and provide an interesting contrast. Whereas Mrs. Anne Wilkinson confines her creative talent to the narrow field she knows well and seldom strays beyond it, Miss Kay Smith attempts far too much and loses her clarity of vision in an accumulating mass of words and unassimilated ideas. So that while the former is always competent and often exciting, the latter descends to a level of tediousness quite out of proportion to what undoubtedly is a genuine talent. I do not wish to suggest that Mrs. Wilkinson is solely a miniaturist and is content to remain at that—such poems as *After Reading Kafka* clearly contradict such a view—but that hers is an intensive method by which she explores her own experience and absorbs her material thoroughly before using them in her poetry.

Of the two collections by Mr. Louis Dudek, *The Searching Image* is the more impressive; in *Twenty-Four Poems* there are too many pieces which, though delightful in their way and true to experience, are too fragmentary to reveal the poet's real stature. Readers of *Outposts* may remember the emotive power of *The Black Girl and the Poem* which appeared in the Canadian number. More disciplined in form, *The Bee Of Words*, *Old Music*, *Flowers on Windows* and *The Pomegranate* all have this enviable quality of recreating the intensity of the poet's mood. As he observes in *Line and Form*:

"So this world of forms, having no scope for eternity,
 is created
 in the limitation of what would be complete and
 perfect,
 achieving virtue only
 by the justness of its compromises."

But what strikes one most about both these booklets is Mr. Dudek's power of concentration—

"Most men give flowers in their full leaves,
 But I give you flowers still in seed;
 These flowers you see are each one wrapped
 In the womb, still concentrated in sap."

ANTHONY NEWMAN.

Up Dale : Dorothy Una Ratcliffe (Nelson, 10s. 6d.).

The Enchanted Grindstone : Henry Morton Robinson (Macdonald, 10s. 6d.).

Wandering Pilgrimage : Ursula Wood } Poems in Pamphlet (Hand
This Unlikely Earth : F. Pratt Green } & Flower Press), 1s.

Within the House : Ernest Van Cante (Stockwell, 1s. 6d.).

The Visitation : Eric Ratcliffe (Stockwell, 1s.).

TO call Dorothy Una Ratcliffe a religious poet requires the qualification that she is so in no ascetic sense, for her love of God finds expression through love for Nature and human nature : "Lord, we gie thanks by luvin' Thi lovely Earth." Yorkshire regionalist to the core, she attempts no "raid on the inarticulate", celebrating the basic themes of love and life and death with something of the uncompromising, sky-shouldering simplicity of her "lovely fearless moors" and a serene optimism that, being faith-rooted, is unquestioning but never facile. Poet, playwright and essayist, Miss Ratcliffe is also President of the Yorkshire Dialect Society—thus deserving well of all who prefer that our heterogeneous English shall not be filleted in the interests of standardization. And if the dialect poetry in *Up Dale* occasionally makes rough going (Southerners will be grateful for the glossary), the reader's reward is as sure as the wayfarer's who tackles the rougher going of the moors.

From Yorkshire to the U.S.A. Like Miss Ratcliffe's, Henry Morton Robinson's literary ego displays more than one facet (to poet add novelist, critic, biographer, historian). Like hers, his poetry lifts far above the horizons of competence. But whilst the Yorkshire poet eschews complex emotions and their exploration in

depth, the American halts before no frontiers to "countries of the mind". In *The Enchanted Grindstone* Mr. Robinson writes with a surgical compassion and his explorations are the more courageous because, though he too finds serenity, it is the serenity of acceptance that may only be attained by crossing the waste land of despair.

Ursula Wood's poetry is sealed with most excellent beauty. In *Wandering Pilgrimage* her themes are man's oneness with the Universe, immortality achieved through created beauty, the serenity of acceptance. Poem after poem evokes cool Botticellian colour and quiet cadences of music. Line after line invites quotation—but one might as soon tear a flower, seeking the secret of loveliness. This book defies and defeats brief notice. It must be lived with—a possession to be treasured.

F. Pratt Green's courage takes him into the waste land and if his explorations lack the depth of Mr. Robinson's, his compassion is warmer and a fine stoicism sustains him. Writing in *This Unlikely Earth* "It ill becomes (how well I know it!) / A Versifier to commend a Poet", he does himself less than justice. Admitting unevenness, there is authentic poetry here, and one critic at any rate must quarrel with Mr. Green's self-imposed label.

Ernest Van Cantele is on much too friendly terms with a pseudo-Housmanesque despair. He can do better than *Within the House* if he will shed subjectivity, accept the discipline of strict verse-forms and remember that the best poetry is distilled (a slow process) from themes that have matured (a slower process) in the creative mind.

Mr. Eric Ratcliffe's failure with a difficult theme is courageous and there are signs that, when he is ready to work with more lucidity and perhaps in shorter forms, there will be better poetry to come.

MICHAEL REDGROVE.

This Room Before Sunrise: Hugo Manning (Gaberbochus Press, 7s. 6d.).

Architectonic: Terence Heywood (Fortune Press, 7s. 6d.).

Orpheus Gone to Hell: Chris Bjerknes (Intro-Round Quarter Series, No. 2. New York, 25c.).

Eight American Poets: edited by James Boyer May (Villiers Publications, 4s. 6d.).

Poetry, No. 1: ed. by R. P. Jones and J. M. Park (Manchester Univ., 2s. 6d.).

RIMBAUD suffered a Season in Hell, and escaped elsewhere. Hugo Manning is compelled to remain in Hell, in *This Room*

Before Sunrise. His intense prose (which is verse in imagery, juxtaposition of idea and observation, and in depth of feeling) contrives a breadth of sensibility, sadness, and hope among all the banal concomitants of a daily despair which one could imagine an older Rimbaud setting down if he had had an English restraint, a post-Eliot grasp of understatement, and a consciousness of a mind which acts as the soul's pain-meter. His reading is wide, his writing is plain and decorative by turns, his essence is metropolitan, his conclusions are sombre; the "harsh miracle of living" proves to him that "we are not abandoned", "the wind flower, wind sown, appears bravely amidst ruins".

Terence Heywood, playboy of more than two hundred magazines, has not yet drunk a cocktail in Hell, though his sips of purgatorial Coca-Cola bring him bubbling around the confines of the poetical limbo in verbal felicity and aural prestidigitation, half-aware of sin and beauty, wide open and fertile to every floating parachute-seed. *How Smoke Gets Into The Air* is here enlarged, enriched, with new poems and an earnest and praiseworthy desire not to bore, not to preach, yet to avoid the charge of dazzling without illuminating. To quote would start an avalanche, since one image leads to another (all legitimate and free from obscurity); and the wealth of word-play, assonance, pun, complicated fantasy of consonant and vowel, all speak ecstatically of a delight in the noumenal world.

Chris Bjerknes turns to a classical Hell with a glance at Pound and Marianne Moore, jazzes Orpheus around among blue jays, "the basso-crepuscular slime", France, Spain, and the nudist colony, in a picturesque breathless whirl of words, highly-coloured, near and far-fetched images tingling all five senses as well as the sixth (the phallic). "The centaur with seaweed in its hair" dances among buttercups and violets with "the inarticulate panther" and "the cow in a squall of words" until the reader cries with the poet—

"I am
withered by these dazzling dead
puns and phrases".

Nevertheless, there is abundant life in Chris Bjerknes, and in the eight American poets, K. L. Beaudoin, T. H. Carter, G. P. Elliott, Scott Greer, William Pillin, James Schevill, Felix N. Stefanile and Harold Witt, whose purposeful gallivanting makes a fascinating anthology. We do not know enough of the work of American poets, and there is room for many more collections as good as this: for, as George P. Elliott points out:

"The problem grows; x has become x one,
x two, x ten: sober unknowns appear
And crowd around like cousins in a dream."

The eleven poets of Manchester University also deserve the light. Some of them have gleamed momentarily in *Poetry Manchester*, and Robin Skelton and Harry Webster are already names. Quieter, more restrained than the Americans, their work is essentially English; some of it (by Geoffrey Connell, A. P. Hinchliffe, H. W. Massingham, John M. Park) casting back perhaps just a little too far; some (by Donald N. Boyall, Joseph Chiari, Roger Mitchell, Roy Palmer) looking further ahead. One needs to be, as John Cassidy suggests:

"Mighty to wield the callipers of love
Or carry mathematics in the heart."

HUGH CREIGHTON HILL.

The True Voice of Feeling: Herbert Read (Faber, 25s.).

The Pre-Raphaelites in Literature and Art: D. S. R. Welland (Harrap, 10s. 6d.).

THE misconception of form has been a contributing factor to the difficulty experienced by many readers in understanding and enjoying modern poetry. There seems to be a widespread belief that the form of a poem is a sort of poetic mould of lines and stanzas, selected by the poet out of a number made available to him by traditional practice, into which he pours his thought and feeling; but that if the poet is a genius he is able to invent new forms which immediately go into the common treasury for the use of his successors.

In *The True Voice of Feeling*, Sir Herbert Read goes to great lengths to show that one of the fundamental principles of English Romantic poetry is that form should not be rhetorical but "organic"—"the voice of the natural man proceeding from his own nature, and formed under laws of its own organization." The main purpose of his book is to trace the discovery and evolution of organic form, and to do this more effectively he examines the work of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Hopkins, Whitman, Hulme, Pound and Eliot, always keeping his theories well in mind. It must be admitted that Sir Herbert tends to emphasize what he thinks conformable to his thesis and to evade that which might conflict, but the study, as a whole, is very enlightening and will prove to be of value both to those who cannot accept all the points he tries to make and to

those whose views on the subject are somewhat confused by the innovations of the last forty years.

The Pre-Raphaelites in Literature and Art is the latest in a series of books designed to present a clearer picture of the main developments in English Literature and, as its title indicates, its scope is confined to the work of the group of writers and artists known as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (because they reverted to European art-forms of the age prior to Raphael). It includes a factual introduction by Dr. Welland, extracts from Pre-Raphaelite writings on art, selections from the poetry of D. G. Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, William Allingham, William Bell Scott, Thomas Woolner, Morris and the early Swinburne, as well as the reactions of such contemporaries as Charles Dickens, Robert Buchanan and Walter Pater. The advantage of this approach to the Pre-Raphaelite Movement is that it enables us to see through 19th Century eyes as well as our own, and to appreciate the nature of its problems, though the inclusion of modern views and an assessment of its achievement against the whole background of Victorian philinistinism might have given the student a better perspective. Nevertheless, it is a reliable volume and admirably serves the purpose for which it is intended.

A. P. COURTLAND.

Selected Poems : Wallace Stevens (Faber, 12s. 6d.).

IN view of the fact that Wallace Stevens is rated so highly in America, where many critics regard him as one of the most important American poets writing today, it may seem odd that his work is so little known among readers (other than poets) in this country. The truth is that the few poems which have been published in England, impressive though they may be, do not show his work to advantage. For, like Mallarmé, with whom he has certain affinities, Stevens has not had at his disposal an existing source of symbols adequate to his purpose (as Yeats had in Irish mythology and Eliot in Christianity) and has, therefore, been compelled to create symbols from his own æsthetic experience—symbols which, though related to the central meaning running throughout his work, do not always convey their fullest significance within the limits of a single poem. Thus his themes and symbols are elaborated from one poem to the next, and not until we have his *Selected Poems* before us does the whole landscape of his poetry become accessible to us. This book is important for that reason alone.

CHRISTOPHER MORGAN.